CLINICAL MINUTE

MY COMPOSITE SHADE ESSENTIALS

A practical guide to the key anterior composite shades worth keeping in stock

DR MONIK VASANT
FRESHDENTAL
CLINIC & INSTITUTE

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A practical guide to the key anterior composite shades worth keeping in stock

The composite systems included in this guide are those I know well through extensive clinical use and feel comfortable recommending. Many are also available for delegates to handle and use during our courses.

This is not a review or ranking of every composite material on the market. There are many excellent systems that are not featured. Their absence should not be taken as a judgement on their quality. It simply reflects the fact that I have less direct clinical experience with them than with the materials included here.

You do not need to purchase every brand or every shade listed. Refer to the section for the system you already use and treat the recommendations as a practical starting point.
Most composite systems offer a much wider selection of body, dentine, enamel, translucent, opaque and effect shades. A broader range will naturally cover more clinical situations, but for many clinicians it also creates unnecessary cost, duplication and materials expiring before they are used.
The shades listed are the ones I would prioritise for managing the majority of routine anterior cases. They are the essentials, not the only shades you may ever need.

The thought process

1. Choose one main composite system

In most cases, it is better to choose one main anterior composite system, stock its key shades and become familiar with how the material behaves.
Carrying several similar systems often creates more choice without necessarily improving your results.

2. Start with the commonly used body shades

In elective aesthetic cases, whitening the teeth before restorative treatment can create a lighter and more uniform starting point.
This can reduce the need to carry a large selection of darker or higher-chroma body shades.
For clinicians undertaking a high proportion of aesthetic dentistry, the most frequently used shades may therefore be weighted towards:
Bleached teeth, B1, A1, A2, A3
Higher-chroma shades remain useful for patients who have not whitened, In addition discoloured teeth may need more opaque base shades too.
Some systems use different shade names, while others group several traditional shades within one universal shade. In addition if you know there is a shade you use a lot then add it to your armamentarium too. As your case complexity advances add more options.

3. Add suitable enamel options

Enamel or translucent materials are useful for incisal layering, full facial layering and modifying the final value and translucency of a restoration.
Some manufacturers provide a broad range of enamel shades with different colours, values and translucencies. Other systems offer only one or two enamel options.
That does not automatically make one system better than another. It simply means you need to understand how your chosen system is designed to be used.

Recommended shade essentials

Venus Pearl

by Kulzer

Body shades:
BXL · BL · B1 · A1 · A2 · A3
Enamel shade:
CL
Optional extras-
OLC dentine
Venus diamond flows in available above body shades

Filtek Supreme XTE

by Solventum

Body shades:
XWB · WB · B1 · A1 · A2 · A3
Enamel shades
XWE · WE · Translucent
Optional extras-
W and B1 dentine
Filtek flows in above body shades

Ecosite Elements

by DMG

Pure body shades:
BL1 · B1 · A1 · A2 · A3 · A3.5
Layer enamel shades:
EB · EL
Optional extras-
Luxaflow flows in available above body shades

Clearfil Majesty ES-2

by Kuraray Noritake

Classic body shades:
XW · W · B1 · A1 · A2 · A3
Enamel shades:
XWE · WE · Clear
Optional extras-
W and B1 dentine
ES-2 Low Flow in above body shades

Estelite Asteria

by Tokuyama

Body shades:
BL · A1 · A2 · A3 · A3.5
Enamel shades:
WE · NE
Optional extras-
Estelite medium flows in above body shades and opaque

Brilliant EverGlow

by Coltene

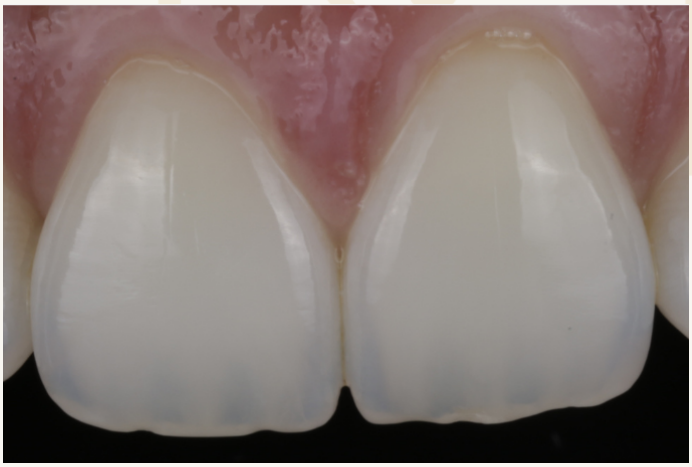
Universal shades:
Xtra Bleach · Bleach · A1/B1 · A2/B2 · A3/D3
Translucent shades:
Bleach Translucent · Translucent
Optional extras-
BL opaque and Everglow flow in above shades

Useful additions

Light dentine/Opaque masking materials

A light dentine or opaque composite shade can be useful when additional masking is required, particularly with slightly discoloured tooth structure. Alternatively, a dedicated masking opaquer can be placed beneath the composite in more advanced discolouration. These are useful additions rather than essential everyday materials. They also need to be used carefully. Too much opacity can produce a restoration that appears bright, flat and artificial hence often significant space is needed.

Characterisation tints



For more advanced anterior aesthetic cases, a small selection of tints can help recreate natural internal effects.

The three colours I would prioritise are:

- Blue: subtle cool incisal effects and enhancing the perception of translucency.
- White: white markings and mamelon highlights.
- Ochre or gold: warmth and controlled internal chroma.

Suitable tint systems include:

✓	✓	✓	✓
Venus Color by Kulzer	**Estelite Color by Tokuyama**	**CLEARFIL Majesty paste tints by Kuraray Noritake**	**IPS Empress Direct Color by Ivoclar**

Universal or shade-adaptive composites

Even with a sensible essentials collection, you will occasionally see less common or more unusual tooth colours that do not sit neatly within the shades you normally carry.

A universal or shade-adaptive composite can provide a useful backup in less aesthetically critical cases and may reduce the need to purchase several additional shades that are rarely used.

Examples include:

- **Venus ONE by Kulzer**
- **Clearfil Majesty ES-2 Universal by Kuraray Noritake**
- **Ecosite One by DMG**

For highly demanding anterior cases, it does not remove the need to understand value, opacity, translucency and the effect of the underlying substrate.

Important reminders

Remember that the final result is influenced by material opacity, composite thickness, remaining tooth structure, the underlying substrate, morphology and surface texture and tooth hydration. Having the correct shade does not automatically guarantee the correct optical result.

THE SIX KEY FACTORS

01 Material opacity Different opacities change value, depth and masking.	02 Composite thickness The same shade can look different at different thicknesses.	03 Remaining tooth structure The amount and colour of natural tooth structure influences the final result.
04 Underlying substrate Dark dentine, restorative materials and transition lines can alter the apparent shade.	05 Surface morphology and texture Shape and texture changes how light is reflected and affects the appearance	06 Tooth hydration Dehydrated teeth appear lighter and more opaque.

Want to take your clinical dentistry further?

Choosing the correct composite shade is only one part of delivering predictable aesthetic dentistry. If you find this useful check out our website www.freshdentalinstitute.com for our hands on programmes :

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